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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT OPENS UNDER SHADOW OF ISLAMIST MP TRIALS

REF: A. A) AMMAN 5907 B) AMMAN 6167 C) AMMAN 5945

[1](#)B. D) AMMAN 5222

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) Prime Minister Marouf Bakhit opened the extraordinary session of parliament that began on August 16, outlining his agenda for reform legislation and briefing deputies on the court proceedings against three Islamic Action Front MPs who were convicted on charges of "fueling national discord and inciting sectarianism" (ref A). The Court of Cassation upheld the conviction of two MPs and the earlier acquittal of a third, but reduced the sentences to one year and one month.

[1](#)2. (SBU) There is disagreement among parliamentarians and political observers as to how the sentences affect the convicted Front members' standing in parliament. Article 75 of the Jordanian constitution disqualifies members if they are sentenced to more than one year for a "non-political" crime, but it appears that the Chamber of Deputies must vote to execute the expulsion. Front representatives argue the two MPs' acts were political in nature, and that Article 75 thus does not apply. Even if considered non-political, they argue Article 90 requires two-thirds of the parliament to vote to strip membership. Supporters of the GOJ argue that the disqualification is automatic under Article 75, and a vote is therefore not required.

[1](#)3. (C) Following the opening remarks and briefing, the 17 Front MPs walked out of the session in protest. The movement,s leadership is reportedly holding meetings to plan next steps, and possibly hold an internal referendum among the movement,s membership. The Front is also planning a sit-in at their headquarters on August 17.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: As we read the constitution, a vote by the chamber seems to be in order. The Brotherhood and Front are in a poor position to exploit this controversy, however. The movement came close to a split along East Bank/West Bank lines after its East Bank-dominated leadership met with PM Bakhit in June and issued a conciliatory statement (ref D). We expect internal debate over next steps to put further strain on the movement's unity. End Comment.

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